

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5560
INFO AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
USLO PEKING
CINCPAC HONOLULU

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 19027

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

EO 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: MILI, PINT, CB, VM, LA, TH
SUBJ: THAILAND AND INDOCHINESE BORDER PROBLEMS

REF: (A) BANGKOK 18560 (B) BANGKOK 18672 (C) BANGKOK 19011

SUMMARY: WITH LIMITED STRENGTHENING OF FORCES ON BOTH SIDES OF THAI-CAMBODIA BORDER, SITUATION THERE HAS CALMED. RTG REGARDS TERRITORIAL DEFENSE AS PRIMARY CAMBODIAN MOTIVATION FOR ATTACKS, COMPOUNDED BY LESSER PROBLEMS OF POSSIBLE THAI SUPPORT FOR RESISTENCE FORCES, REFUGEE FLOW AND SMUGGLING. PROBLEM APPEARS CONSIDERABLY LESS SERIOUS THAN CAMBODIAN-VIETNAMESE SKIRMISHING BUT MORE SERIOUS THAN THAT BETWEEN LAOS AND CAMBODIA. RTG LOOKS TO UNGA SESSION AS POSSIBLE VENUE FOR DISCUSSIONS WITH CAMBODIANS ON MUTUAL PROBLEMS, INCLUDING THE BORDER. END SUMMARY.

1. DESPITE A STRENGTHENING OF FORCES IN RECENT DAYS ON BOTH SIDES OF THE CAMBODIAN-THAI BORDER, ACTION AND TENSION HAVE
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DIMINISHED. RTG PUBLICLY AND PRIVATELY INDICATES THAT ALTHOUGH SKIRMISHES MAY REOCCUR, NO LARGE-SCALE FIGHTING IS ANTICIPATED, AND BENGKOK WILL CONTINUE TO EMPLOY DIPLOMATIC EFFORTS TO RESOLVE THE DIFFICULTIES. BANGKOK ALSO INTENDS NOT RPT NOT TO RELOCATE THAI VILLAGES ON BORDER ALTHOUGH SOME WOMEN AND CHILDREN MIGHT BE RELOCATED TEMPORARILY. RTG ARMY DEPUTY J-2 DENIGRATED TO US SIGNIFICANCE OF REMARK BY DEPUTY SUPREME COM-

MANDER GEN. KRIANGSAK TO EFFECT THAT THAILAND COULD TAKE CAMBODIA'S BATTAMBANG, SISOPHAN AND SIEM REAP IF CAMBODIANS TRIED TO TAKE THAILAND'S TAPHRYA DISTRICT. REMARK WAS IMPROMPTU RESPONSE TO QUESTION AND DOES NOT REFLECT THAI CONTINGENCY PLANS (REF A).

2. IN ANALYSIS PROVIDED US, BOTH MFA AND J-2 REGARD PRIMARY CAMBODIAN MOTIVATION TO BE EFFORT BY NEWLY REVOLUTIONIZED COUNTRY AND REGIME TO DEFEND AGGRESSIVELY WHAT IT CONSIDERS TO BE ITS TERRITORY. CAMBODIAN ATTITUDE IS INTENSIFIED BY THE DEEP IDEOLOGICAL GULF BETWEEN THAILAND AND CAMBODIA. SUBSUMED UNDER THIS PRIMARY FACTOR ARE OTHER LESS SIGNIFICANT PROBLEMS ASSOCIATED WITH THE BORDER: A) THE MISTAKEN BELIEF IN PHNOM PENH THAT BANGKOK SUPPORTS THE RESISTANCE FORCES OPERATING FROM THAILAND. (MFA INSISTS THAT THERE IS NO RPT NO OFFICIAL SUPPORT FOR RESISTANCE FORCES. HOWEVER, BECAUSE THAILAND SIMPLY CANNOT RPT NOT EFFECTIVELY SEAL THE ENTIRE BORDER, MFA SOURCE COULD NOT RULE OUT SOME PRIVATE THAI SUPPORT FOR THE CAMBODIAN INSURGENTS.) B) SMUGGLING ACTIVITIES FROM BOTH SIDES OF THE BORDER. C) INABILITY ON CAMBODIA'S PART TO STEM THE FLOW OF REFUGEES FROM CAMBODIA. BUT, MFA AND J-2 STRESSED, THESE THREE FACTORS ARE LESS IMPORTANT TO THE CAMBODIANS THAN THE TERRITORIAL ISSUE.

3. MFA INFORMED US AUGUST 25 THAT PHNOM PENH HAS NOT YET RESPONDED TO RTG PROTESTS CONCERNING BORDER INCIDENTS IN JULY AND ON AUGUST 2. (REF B). CAMBODIAN EMBASSY IN VIENTIANE REJECTED BOTH NOTES, ALTHOUGH ONE HAD OBVIOUSLY BEEN OPENED. CONFIDENTIAL

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CONTRARY TO THE EARLIER IMPRESSION RTG PUBLICIZED, CAMBODIAN EMBASSY IN PEKING ACCEPTED THE NOTES, BUT NO RESPONSE HAS YET BEEN RECEIVED. CITING SENIOR MILITARY SOURCES, PRESS REPORTED AUGUST 25 THAT THAI AND CAMBODIAN AMBASSADORS MET IN VIENTIANE TO DISCUSS THE BORDER SITUATION. WE HAVE BEEN UNABLE THUS FAR TO UNEARTH ANYTHING ON THIS STORY.

4. ALTHOUGH THERE IS SOME QUESTION IN THAI MINDS ABOUT THE POSITION OF CAMBODIAN DEPUTY PM FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS IENG SARY (REF C), MFA HOPES THAT THAI FOREIGN MINISTER AND CAMBODIAN COUNTERPART, WHOEVER IT MAY BE, CAN DISCUSS AND BEGIN TO RESOLVE THE BORDER DIFFICULTIES IN NEW YORK DURING THE FALL UNGA SESSION.

5. FURTHER AFIELD, MFA AND J-2 DESCRIBED THE BORDER SKIRMISHES BETWEEN CAMBODIA AND VIETNAM AS MUCH MORE SERIOUS THAN THOSE ON THE THAI-CAMBODIAN BORDER. WHILE MOST OBSERVERS REGARD CAMBODIA AS THE PROBABLE INSTIGATOR OF FIGHTING ON THE VIETNAM BORDER, OUR J-2 CONTACT CLAIMED THAT SIGNIFICANT NUMBERS (NO FIGURES) OF VIETNAMESE TROOPS ARE STILL OCCUPYING TERRITORY IN SVAY RIENG PROVINCE OF CAMBODIA. MFA SAID THAT DESPITE ALLEGATIONS AND CHARGES ABOUT TERRITORIAL DISAGREEMENTS BETWEEN LAOTIANS AND CAMBODIANS, HE WAS UNAWARE OF ANY ACTUAL FIGHTING. J-2, WHOSE SOURCES SHOULD

BE BETTER, SAID SOME VERY LIMITED SKIRMISHES HAD OCCURRED, OF FAR LESS SIGNIFICANCE THAN THOSE ON CAMBODIA'S THAI AND VIETNAMESE BORDERS.

6. COMMENT: THAIS ARE NOT SANGUINE ABOUT EARLY RESOLUTION OF DIFFICULTIES BUT MFA AT LEAST HOPES THAT A FIRM BUT PATIENT POLICY WILL EVENTUALLY PERMIT A MODUS VIVENDI WITH THE INDO-CHINESE STATES. MFA REGARDS WITH CONCERN THE CONCLUSION RECENTLY OF THE VARIOUS TREATIES AND AGREEMENTS BETWEEN LAOS AND VIETNAM, BUT SUSPECTS THAT THE LAOTIANS EVENTUALLY WILL AT LEAST ATTEMPT TO REASSERT GREATER INDEPENDENCE FROM VIETNAM THAN CURRENTLY APPEARS THE CASE. LIKEWISE IN CAMBODIA, MFA EXPECTS CURRENT XENOPHOPIA TO ABATE SLOWLY.

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7. DESPITE RTG ASSESSMENT, MANY THAIS THINK, AND WE AGREE, THAT SUSPECTED THAI SUPPORT FOR CAMBODIAN RESISTANCE FORCES IS A SIGNIFICANT FACTOR IN CAMBODIA'S ACTIONS ON THE BORDER.
O'DONOHUE

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